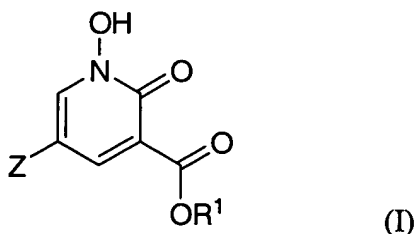


IN THE CLAIMS

The listing of the claims which follows replaces any and all prior versions and/or listings of the claims in the application.

1. (original) A compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof:



wherein

Z represents C<sub>2-6</sub> alkynyl, aryl or heteroaryl, any of which groups may be optionally substituted; and

R<sup>1</sup> represents hydrogen, C<sub>1-6</sub> alkyl, C<sub>3-7</sub> heterocycloalkyl(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl, di(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkylamino(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl, C<sub>2-6</sub> alkylcarbonyloxy(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl or C<sub>3-7</sub> cycloalkoxycarbonyloxy(C<sub>1-6</sub>)alkyl.

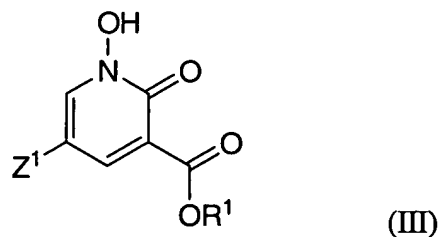
2. (original) A compound as claimed in Claim 1 wherein Z represents optionally substituted C<sub>2-6</sub> alkynyl.

3. (original) A compound as claimed in Claim 1 wherein Z represents an optionally substituted aryl or heteroaryl moiety.

4. (currently amended) A compound as claimed in Claim 1 ~~any one of Claims 1 to 3~~ wherein

R<sup>1</sup> is hydrogen, methyl, ethyl, morpholinylethyl, dimethylaminoethyl, acetoxymethyl, pivaloyloxymethyl or 1-(cyclohexyloxycarbonyloxy)ethyl.

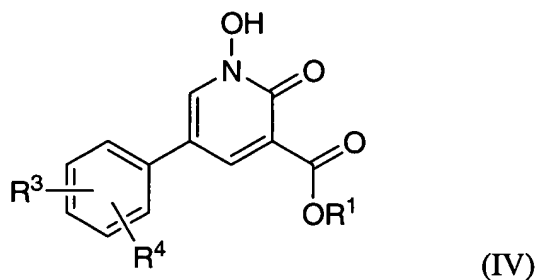
5. (currently amended) A compound as claimed in Claim 1 of formula (III):



wherein

Z<sup>1</sup> represents optionally substituted aryl. ~~aryl~~; and  
~~R<sup>1</sup> is as defined in Claim 1.~~

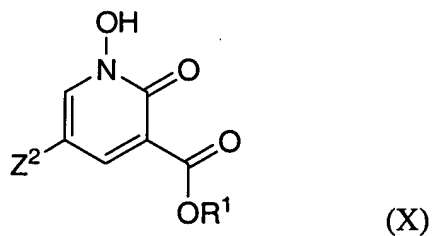
6. (currently amended) A compound according to claim 5 of formula (IV):



wherein

~~R<sup>1</sup> is as defined in Claim 5; and~~  
each of R<sup>3</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> ~~is~~ may independently be selected from H or a substituent group.

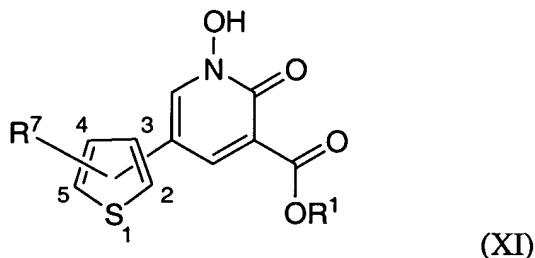
7. (currently amended) A compound as claimed in Claim 1 of formula (X):



wherein

Z<sup>2</sup> represents optionally substituted heteroaryl. ~~heteroaryl~~; and  
~~R<sup>1</sup> is as defined in Claim 1.~~

8. (currently amended) A compound as claimed in Claim 7 of formula (XI) below:



wherein

~~R<sup>1</sup> is as defined in Claim 7;~~ and

R<sup>7</sup> is selected from halogen, hydroxy, -NO<sub>2</sub>, -NH<sub>2</sub>, formyl, C<sub>2-6</sub> alkylcarbonyl, -CO<sub>2</sub>H, C<sub>2-6</sub> alkoxy carbonyl, C<sub>1-6</sub> alkyl, C<sub>1-6</sub> alkenyl, C<sub>2-6</sub> alkynyl, -CN, C<sub>1-6</sub> alkoxy, C<sub>1-6</sub> alkylthio, C<sub>1-6</sub> alkylsulfinyl, C<sub>1-6</sub> alkylsulfonyl or a group of the formula (II):



where X is a linkage group and R<sup>2</sup> is a ~~relatively~~ hydrophobic group.

9. (currently amended) A compound as claimed in Claim 1, which is:  
~~selected from:~~

1-hydroxy-2-oxo-5-phenyl-1,2-dihydropyridine-3-carboxylic acid,

1-hydroxy-5-{3-[[[1-(1-naphthyl)ethyl]amino]carbonyl]amino}phenyl-2-oxo-1,2-dihydropyridine-3-carboxylic acid,

5-(3-[[[5-bromothiophen-2-yl]carbonyl]amino]phenyl)-1-hydroxy-2-oxo-1,2-dihydropyridine-3-carboxylic acid,

5-[2-[[[2-chlorobenzyl]amino]carbonyl]amino]phenyl-1-hydroxy-2-oxo-1,2-dihydropyridine-3-carboxylic acid,

1-hydroxy-5-(2-nitrophenyl)-2-oxo-1,2-dihydropyridine-3-carboxylic acid;

or a tautomer thereof, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

10.-11. (canceled).

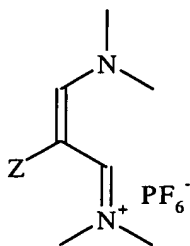
12. (currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound as claimed in Claim 1, ~~any one of Claims 1 to 9~~, or a tautomer thereof, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, in association with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

13. (currently amended) The pharmaceutical composition as claimed in Claim 12 which further comprises one or more other agents for the treatment of viral infections ~~such as an antiviral agent, or an immunomodulatory agent such as  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  or  $\gamma$  interferon.~~

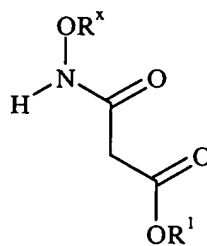
14. (currently amended) A method of inhibiting hepatitis C virus polymerase and/or of treating or preventing an illness due to hepatitis C virus, the method involving administering to a human or animal (preferably mammalian) subject suffering from the condition a therapeutically or prophylactically effective amount of ~~the pharmaceutical composition claimed in Claim 12 or Claim 13 or~~ of a compound as claimed in Claim 1, ~~any one of Claims 1 to 9,~~ or a tautomer thereof, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

15. (currently amended) A method of preparation of a pharmaceutical composition, involving admixing at least one compound as claimed in Claim 1, ~~any one of Claims 1 to 9,~~ or a tautomer thereof, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, with one or more pharmaceutically acceptable adjuvants, diluents or carriers ~~and/or with one or more other therapeutically or prophylactically active agents.~~

16. (currently amended) A process to prepare a compound as claimed in Claim 1 ~~any one of Claims 1 to 9~~ which comprises reacting a compound of formula (XIV) with a compound of formula (XV):



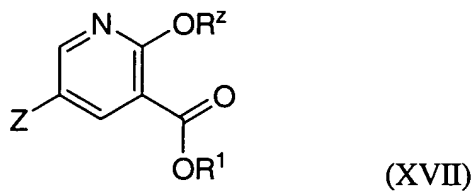
(XIV)



(XV)

wherein ~~Z and R<sup>1</sup> are as defined in Claim 1,~~ and R<sup>x</sup> represents a hydroxy-protecting group; followed by removal of the hydroxy-protecting group R<sup>x</sup>.

17. (currently amended) A process to prepare a compound as claimed in Claim 1 ~~any one of Claims 1 to 9~~ which comprises oxidizing a compound of formula (XVII):



wherein ~~Z and R<sup>1</sup> are as defined in Claim 1,~~ and R<sup>Z</sup> represents C<sub>1-6</sub> alkyl; followed by cleavage of the R<sup>Z</sup> moiety.